

# the india diary international centre

IIC EXPERIENCE: A FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS, 2019

## Rudrakshya's Odissi

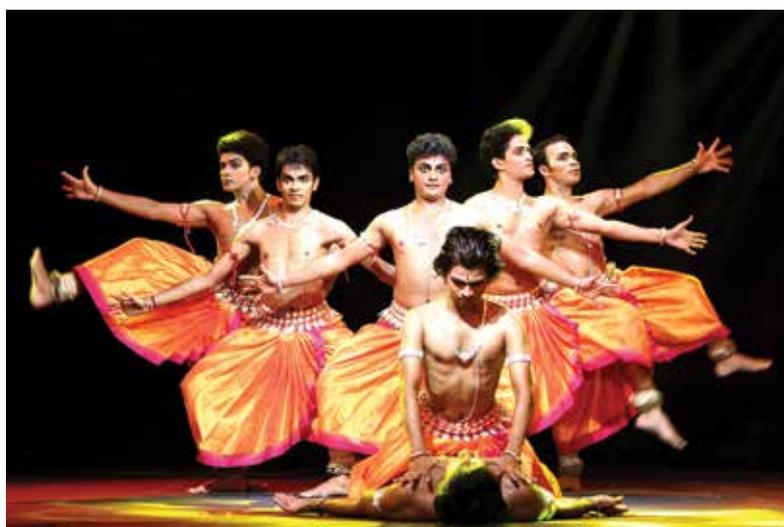
### PERFORMANCE

*Magic in Movement.* Odissi presented by artists of the Rudrakshya Foundation, Bhubaneswar

**11 October 2019**

The opening performance of the annual Festival was an impressive Odissi presentation by the all-male Rudrakshya Foundation troupe under the direction of choreographer Guru Bichitrananda Swain.

Guru Bichitrananda Swain likened dance to yoga, both sharing the ultimate goal of *mokshya*, union of self with the divine. His *Surya Stuti Mangalacharan* communicated the essence of Bhakti Yoga with an elegantly unrushed choreography. The *Jagannatha Swami* opening, performed as a round with dancers moving on different levels, was a refreshing variation of the *pushpanjali* offering of flowers. *Mangalacharan* concluded with the yogic *surya pranam* with no compromise to traditional Odissi aesthetics.



The rhythmic waves of pure dance elaborations in *Taal Tarang* were comparable to Hatha Yoga's physical coordination while using different rhythmic patterns (*chhanda*) and speeds (*laya*) within one *tala*. It was a joy to witness the expansive, luxurious movement we remember of Gurus Kelucharan Mohapatra and Gangadhar Pradan's styles of Odissi.

*Yaha Krishna Saha Kali* showcased Rudrakshyas' ability to communicate in expression and movement, the metaphysical similarities and contrasts of Shakti and Krishna. Kali's strength and power alternated with the *lasya* of Odissi's nuanced sensuality, as Krishna played out his *leela* with Radha and the other Gopis. The intimate embraces of Radha-Krishna were aesthetically shown between two male dancers, as is also done in the cousin-brother, traditionally all male form of Mayurbhanj Chhau, something that would generally be uncomfortable between male-female partner artists.

We saw the mental focus of Raja Yoga in the evoking of *rasa* through dramatic expression (*abhinaya*). This dramatic choreography, *Chakravyuh*, detailed the tragic 13th day at the battle of Kurukshetra when Arjun's son, Abhimanyu, broke into the Chakravyuh military formation but couldn't get out of it. The music composition by Guru Ramahari Das and rhythms composed by *pardala* guru, Daneswar Swain, contributed greatly to the production.

*The Magic in Movement Rudrakshya* Odissi dancers—Jagyandatta Pradhan, Dushasan Sahoo, Bichitra Behra, Santosh Ram, Samir Kumar Panigrahi, Surendra Pradhan, Sanjeev Kumar Jena and Rashmi Ranjan Swain—were individually and collectively superb in the fulfilled movement technique of Odissi, controlled energy of performance and expression.

■ SHARON LOWEN

# Treasures of Awadh

## EXHIBITION

*Awadh Se Chand Warq*

Curated and designed by ODDWORKS

INAUGURATION: Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan

EXHIBITION: *Husn-e-Karigari-e-Awadh*

INAUGURATION: Laila Tyabji

COLLABORATION: Mahindra Sanatkada  
Lucknow Festival

**11 to 15 October**

The two exhibitions, *Awadh Se Chand Warq* and *Husn-e-Karigari-e-Awadh*, depicted the various aspects of Awadh's varied cultural and social heritage. What was clearly evident was the sheer artistic sensitivity, coupled with an obvious passion for Awadh and its people, and their arts and crafts.

*Awadh Se Chand Warq* brought into focus a diverse range. One could call them archival treasures of Awadh: photographs, artefacts, text and textures....An entire range that drew one to the rich culture that lies tucked in that state.

What also stood out was the very diversity. Through an entire range of photographs of homes and the personalities who had lived in them, it was apparent that the region had been drawing hundreds of families from various other regions of the country. For decades, or shall we say for centuries, it is not just the local Hindus and Muslims who



have been living there—in the proverbial Ganga–Jamuni *tahzeeb*—but also people from West Bengal, Punjab, Odisha, Kashmir, Kumaon, Maharashtra and Garhwal; also Anglo-Indians and, yes, even the Chinese, in the backdrop of a fabric of togetherness.

As the very name *Husn-e-Karigari-e-Awadh* holds out, this exhibition focused on the crafts and their masters. Well spread out, the artists together with their art held sway. After all, artists and art go hand in hand; the combination standing out when they are right in front of you, weaving or drawing or embroidering, or putting together and assembling sheer artistic magic with the strength of their hands!

As I saw *chikankari* embroiderer, Rukhsana, from the old city of Lucknow, doing *chikankari* embroidery on a *dupatta*, I got talking to her about her craft. There was a sense of connectivity and bonding. It was the same with the other artists, deeply and passionately involved with their arts: calligraphy by the father–son duo Farman Haider Jafferi and Azeem Haider Jafferi, bone carvings by Jalaluddin, the traditional *tukdi-ka-kaam* by Asma, *murtikari* by *murtikar* Mahesh Kumar and Sunita Kumari. They brought to life the various arts and crafts that the Awadhi region has been famous for. Even in this day and age, these hand-crafted traditional crafts and arts stand out. Together with them, their makers.



■ HUMRA QURAISHI

# A Poetic Rendition of Tragedy

## PERFORMANCE

*Soz Khwani*

Presented by Askari Naqvi from Mustafabad,  
Uttar Pradesh

**12 October 2019**

The unique experience at the Festival this year was *Soz Khwani*, presented by Askari Naqvi, who left many in the audience with moist eyes.

Traditionally performed during the month of Muharram, *Soz Khwani* is a musical/poetic rendition of the tragedy of Karbala. Scripted in Urdu, classical Awadhi and sometimes in Persian, it is enhanced by the intensity of Hindustani ragas rendered at gatherings or *Majalis*’, mostly in *Imambaras* or *Sanatkada*, where people congregate to mourn the sacrifices of Imam Hussain and 72 members of his clan who lost their lives. Askari used story-telling and narration to link the poetry rendered in Hindustani ragas, enhancing the poignancy of his performance.

Opening with an invocatory verse in raga *Yaman*, he proceeded with the story and lamented the bereavement



of those who lost their loved ones. He did this in a simple rendition of ragas with the background of the recorded *Aas* by four other mourners, since no musical instrument, even the *tanpura*, is allowed for these songs of lamentation.

The detailed and well-researched introduction of *Soz Khwani* by Asha Rani Mathur, the competent compere, had mentally prepared the audience for what to expect. But the vivid and intense expressions of Askari Naqvi, himself choked with emotion, made the audience experience the intensity of grief.

■ MANJARI SINHA

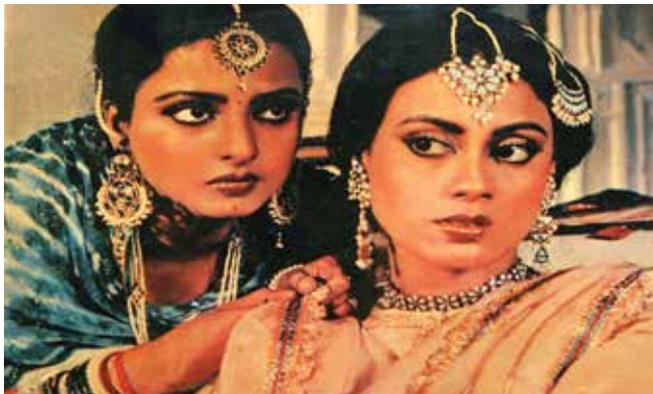
# Awadh in Film

## FILM FESTIVAL:

*Filmi Duniya Mein Awadh*

**11–13 October 2019**

Films this year also featured distinguished Indian filmmakers. Satyajit Ray’s *Shatranj ke Khilari*, based on Munshi Premchand’s story on the fall of the kingdom of Awadh to the British forces of the East India Company in 1857, remains a riveting film, well over 40 years after its release. Ray interprets the loss of Awadh, and hence its



culture and generosity of spirit, through the story of two pleasant, decadent, chess-loving aristocrats who are unable to grasp the tragedy and the loss of their impending independence to the British, because of their addiction to a personal pleasure.

*Umrao Jaan* (1981), based on Mirza Hadi Ruswa’s novel, *Umrao Jaan Ada*, and directed by Muzaffar Ali, is a touching film on the life of a *tawaif* (courtesan) blessed with musical gifts, destined to live an unfulfilled, lonely life thanks to the class divide of feudal Lucknow in the 1850s. Little Ameeran, kidnapped from her village by a vengeful neighbour seeking to get even with her father whose testimony sent him to prison, is sold to a madame in Lucknow and is trained to be a most seductive *tawaif*. Her life is one of artistic achievements and emotional betrayals.

Shyam Benegal’s *Junoon*, based on Ruskin Bond’s novella on the siege of Lucknow in 1857, and the pursuit by a hot-headed nawab of a beautiful young British girl through the course of the fighting, and the inevitably tragic ending that follows, is an interesting though sentimental film.

*Pakeezah*, directed by Kamal Amrohi, and set in early 20th century Awadh, still grips despite its emotional excesses.

■ PARTHA CHATTERJEE

# Film Panorama

## FILM FESTIVAL

*Magic at the Movies—A Selection of World Cinema*

**13–15 October 2019**

Screened at prestigious film festivals around the world and critically acclaimed, the 11 films screened at the Festival offered a panorama of recent developments in art-house and world cinema outside the Hollywood circuit.

The selected films dealt with a constellation of thought-provoking, universal themes combined with striking visuals and compelling acting performances. From the ruins of an unusual, post-earthquake suburban Italy as seen in *My Own Good*, we travel to the maze of narrow lanes of New Delhi's Tibetan refugee colony in *The Sweet Requiem*; from the minimalist and almost wordless depiction of the rising love between two dysfunctional strangers in the Festival's opening film—*Stray*, from New Zealand—we shift to the unconventional relationship portrayed in

*I Dream in Another Language*, in which the power of words reunites, in a remote area of Mexico, two old souls whose lives had inexplicably fallen apart for 50 years. Love is stated and irretrievably denied in Pawel Pawlikowski's sumptuous *Cold War*; likewise, silver linings cannot exist in the Palestine of *Screwdriver*, wherein a man returns home after 15 years in jail. Family ties, in different delineations, are at the centre of stories such as those of *Custody*; *All About Me* and *Can't Say Goodbye*, wherein the audience contemplated an uncommon man–animal kinship in *The Pigeon Thieves*, set against the evocative landscape of Central Anatolia.

Once again, *Magic at the Movies* may suggest how thinking in terms of 'national cinemas' seems more and more anachronistic with every passing year. A Mexican author may exhibit greater affinities with a German or a French one rather than with a fellow countryman, whereas a Turkish film surprisingly resonates with a Polish, Indian or Portuguese film. Therein, perhaps, lies the 'magic' of cinema.

■ NICO PSALTIDIS

# The IIC Quarterly

## RELEASE OF THE IIC QUARTERLY

*Autumn 2019* by Shri N. N. Vohra, President, IIC

Edited by Omita Goyal

**14 October 2019**

The launch of the Autumn issue of the *IIC Quarterly* was a major highlight of the Festival of the Arts, held at the Gandhi–King Plaza, the ambience appropriately capturing the flavour of Autumn.



Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Director, IIC, welcomed the audience. Omita Goyal, Chief Editor, described the issue as a general one which covered topics ranging from the fate of Indian soldiers in the First World War to the 150th anniversary of Gandhi's birth; to Nehruvian cinema and politics. Shri N. N. Vohra, President IIC, described the *Quarterly* as a prized asset of the Centre, and symbolic of its multifarious activities. He said the contents greatly appealed to the discerning reader.

Dr. Karan Singh, Chairman of the Editorial Board, recalled that he had suggested to Founder–President Dr. C. D. Deshmukh that the IIC should have a Quarterly to represent various shades of thought and opinion, representing in a nutshell the ethos of the Centre: intellectual, cultural and social. Shri Shyam Saran, Life Trustee, made mention of the fact that the IIC was a place which generated creative ideas and scholarly exchanges, which were in turn reflected in the *Quarterly*. Various cerebral thoughts were expressed through the publication which were important in the present day.

Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan, Life Trustee, said that each issue of the *IIC Quarterly* brings something new and fresh, and also invites new people to contribute. Shri Soli J. Sorabjee, Life Trustee, said that the *IIC Quarterly* made India international because its contents are not restricted to any particular country, but cover a wide range.

■ ARVINDAR SINGH

# A Progressive Exhibition

## EXHIBITION

*Contextualising Progressive, Indian Art from the 20th Century*

Curated by Vijay Kowshik and Gogi Saroj Pal

INAUGURATION by Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan

COLLABORATION: Arts Glacerhi

**11 to 25 October 2019**

*Contextualising Progressive, Indian Art from the 20th Century* proved to be a significant exhibition of paintings and graphics. The co-curators, Gogi Saroj Pal and Vijay Kowshik, made their selection well, so that all of contemporary Indian art from the year 1900 to 2000, by significant artists from north and east India were covered.

It was extraordinary to see originals by Rabindranath and Abanindranath Tagore included in this show. The golden glow of sunset in Rabindranath's painting, the emaciated figure from Bengal's famine by Somnath Hore, and the nude woman by Souza were all predictable. What was different and mesmerising was the power of Shiva as conceived by Abanindranath Tagore. Shiva dances beating upon his *damaru*, his dark slender arms and legs moving against a background aglow with light. A small work just seven inches high in the more complex medium of tempera on paper, it conceives a god who is more human than divine.

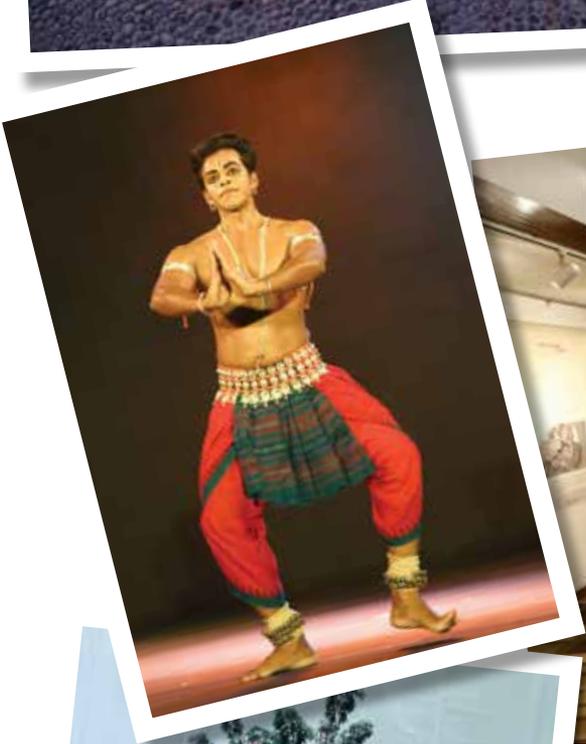
It is exceptional also in his work, given the fact that Abanindranath belonged to the Vaishnavite section of the Tagore household, the remaining members having joined the reform movement of the Brahmo Samaj. Early in his career, when he turned from European art and portraits to indigenous Indian themes, Abanindranath began with a series on the Krishna *lila*. Conceiving the form of Shiva was truly a rare finding in his work. (Dancing Shiva by Abanindranath Tagore, 1923.)

Exceptional also was a very large and powerful work by Gade, among the five original members of the Bombay Progressives, who is rarely given his due. The Santhal girl by Nandalal Bose is restored so much so that her sari shines out in a brilliant yellow. The Raja Ravi Varma was one of his predictable themes of a reclining woman, and again his picture seems to be restored too much. Not all the works were of fine quality when assessed against works by these artists, which includes a drawing shown by Manjit Bawa.

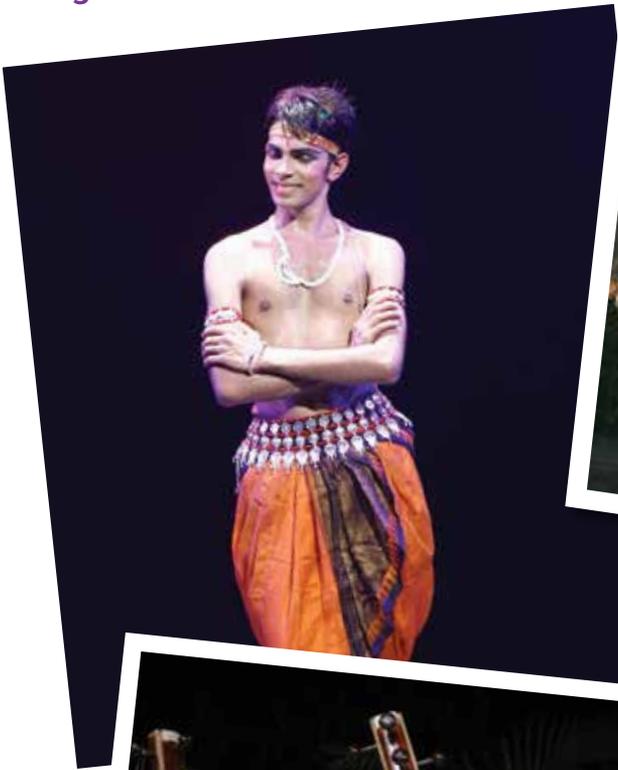


The Progressive Group Artist's paintings are owned by the Progressives Art Gallery in Defence Colony and in Dubai, with R. N. Singh building his collection as early as 50 years ago, from the 1980s. Two works were loaned for this show by Amba Sanyal, painted by the veteran artist B. C. Sanyal, who lived in Nizamuddin East in Delhi. It included a *Portrait of a Boy* painted by Sanyal while still in Lahore, before he migrated to Delhi in 1947. Another loan was from Vijay Kowshik, of paintings by his father Dinkar Kowshik, an artist who later took charge as Principal of Kala Bhavan in Santiniketan from 1967 onwards. Benode Behari Mukherjee's *Papercuts* and Ramkinkar's painting of a cat were also loaned by Vijay Kowshik. One of Kowshik's paintings exhibited and titled *Man with Umbrella* was outstanding in its humorous depiction of a banal theme. This, and the one by Abanindranath, are two paintings which exceeded our expectations.

Vignettes from the Festival



Vignettes from the Festival



# Musical Brazil

## PERFORMANCE

*From Bossa Nova to Samba*

A concert by the ensemble, Sabor do Brasil

COLLABORATION: Embassy of Brazil

12 October 2019

Reflecting the wide diversity of its content, the *IIC Experience* featured Brazilian music (one of the world's most creative and diverse musical cultures), whose attributes encompass both its national and regional traditions, as well as its mix of indigenous, European and African elements. They have layered this with jazz, rock, reggae, hip-hop, pop and electronic, added the talents of superb composers like Joao Gilberto and Antonio Jobim; the lyrics of poets like Vinicius de Moraes; and musicians like Baden Powell, Luiz Bonfá, Laurindo Almeida, Toquinho, not forgetting Jobim and Gilberto themselves, to create a rich tapestry.

The birth of bossa nova took place on the beaches of Rio, says one version. Others credit Jobim and Gilberto as the creators of the genre. By the mid-1960s, this New Wave had a firm grip around the world, and its immediate popularity was guaranteed by a single song and a single film. The song was *The Girl from Ipanema*, whose lyrics were written by Vinicius de Moraes, and set to music by Jobim, and it sky-rocketed to global fame on charts. The film was *Manha da Carnaval*, better known as *Black Orpheus*, *Orfeu Negro* in Portuguese, multi-award winner in 1956 whose music was composed by Jobim and Luiz Bonfá, and based on the musical play by Vinicius, *Orfeu da Conceição*. More than just showcasing samba, *Black Orpheus* brought this music to life, making composers Jobim and Bonfá international stars. From the very opening title scene to the climactic carnival parade, music pervades practically every moment of the film.

Sabor do Brasil brought together four talented young musicians. The ensemble was established in October 2018, and since then have performed at reputed music venues in Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore, Chandigarh and Kolkata.

The ensemble featured Pradyumna Singh Manot on piano; Ahona Sen, vocals; Aditya Servaia on bass guitar; and Bihu Mukherji on drums. All four have long experience as jazz musicians, especially in the Latin style; and have participated in jazz festivals as well as jammed with noted Indian musicians like Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. They brought that experience and the sheer love of Latin music to the concert, much enhanced by fine performances



across the board.

Sabor delighted the audience by performing many of the standards of bossa nova as well as some lively sambas. Of course, *The Girl from Ipanema* was featured, as also bossa/jazz classics such as *Desafinado* and *One Note Samba*. Bossa/pop appeared with a lively delivery of the Sergio Mendes number, *Mas Que Nada*. In the quick-tempo *Samba Berimbau*, Ahona's voice captured the robust Afro-Brazil flavour and rhythm of Bahia.

The ensemble threw itself enthusiastically into the spirit of the music; and the piano by Paddy and drums by Bihu caught the attention of the audience.

■ ASHARANI MATHUR

# Blending Music, Theatre and Dance

## PERFORMANCE

### *Panchavati*

A Yakshagana performance, an episode from the Ramayana

Presented by Hanumagiri Meyla from Karnataka

**COLLABORATION:** Dept. of Kannada and Culture, Govt. of Karnataka

**13 October 2019**

Yakshagana, literally meaning the music of celestials, is an all-male theatre tradition of the 15th–16th century post-Vijayanagar era in Karnataka. Operatically conceived as a fantasy, its *prasangas* (episodes) are led by the *Bhagavatha* (singer) of the *Himmela* (background musicians), seated on the narrow, raised platform on stage, literally and metaphorically calling the tune for all stage action. The Yakshagana performance, featuring a segment of *Panchavati* (unknown authorship, assigned to AD 1657), staged by the Hanumagiri Meyala from Karnataka, was a rare event. The *Sabhalakshana Gajmukha ninna* Ganesh prayer was heralded with the stentorian, high-pitched, impeccable classicism of raga *Kalyani* by Ravichandra Kannadikatte, the *Bhagavatha*, with the non-stop *sruti-petti* drone (replacing *sruti-burude* comprising a bamboo reed-pipe at the end of a bottle-shaped gourd), a brief percussive overture combined *Chende* by Chaitanya Krishna Padyana, *Maddake* by Shridhar Vitla, and *Prasad* on *Chakrathala*. The tepid start (mostly dialogue with minimal movement restricted to Kathak-like pirouettes) saw Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in their Panchavati home in forest Chitrakoota with Lakshmana seeing to their daily needs. Rama quells Sita's apprehensions about being left alone with *Pogaadiraiyya* ('Don't Go'—in raga *Charukesi*). Shurpanakha enters, her cannibalistic appetite kindled by the human smells in the forest,

changing to carnal desire on seeing Rama. Action peaks as, transforming herself into a beautiful woman, Maya Shurpanakha flirtatiously approaches Rama, introducing herself as high-born *Ati Kulavati Naanu*, metaphorically affirming that, like the river embracing the sea, she has to submerge in Rama the Ocean. The play survives on the Bhagavatha's brilliance and the imaginatively varied choreography of Maya Shurpanakha's impeccable footwork, and the sheer histrionic excellence of Santosh Kumar's persuasive *abhinaya Narapati-Ati Kalaavati Naanu* (sung in melting Mohanam), which had to be seen to be believed.

The play on words in the Shurpanakha–Rama dialogue exchange, the latter seeing through her disguise, was unfortunately missed by non-Kannadigas. The bejeweled splendour of Maya Shurpanakha, the gorgeous black and red Kathakali-like attire of Ravana, Shurpanakha and brother Khara with torso jewellery (*Bhujakeerti*, *Yedekattu*, elaborate Mundu [hair-do]), against the plain dhoti and hair in the top knot of Ram–Lakshman, provided aesthetic counter-points.

■ LEELA VENKATARAMAN



# Mystical Piety

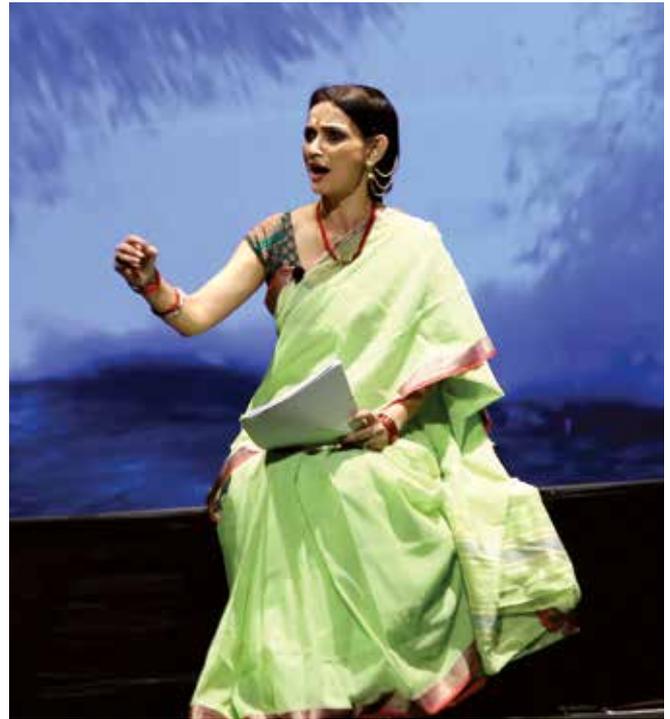
## PERFORMANCE

*Shabd Leela—The Interplay of Words*

Directed by K. K. Raina

14 October 2019

Directed by K. K. Raina, conceived, scripted and narrated in Hindi by Ila Arun, *Shabd Leela* is a partially dramatised reading of the script, which contains selected extracts from the works of the well-known poet and playwright, Dr. Dharamvir Bharti. Picking up prose from his works, such as *Kanupriya*, *Ek Sahityik Ke Prem Patra* and *Andha Yug*, Ila Arun created a biographical sketch of Bharti, focusing on his relationship with two women, trying to see a resonance from Krishna's life, wherein, even though Rukmani was his wife, only Radha's name is linked with Krishna and taken together with his. Ila justifies Dharamvir's simultaneous dalliance with his first wife, Kanta Bharti, and Pushpa Bharti, his paramour, who became his spouse in an informal unconventional ceremony. The three, Dharamvir, Kanta and Pushpa, took a vow on the banks of the Ganges to always remain inseparable. That is why the unconventional consensual bigamous wedlock had a certain mystical piety about it. Yet, in the construction of the play, Kanta, his first wife, and the third arm of the triangle, was largely ignored.



Ila took up the role of the *Sutradhar*, allowing Raina to dramatised the play; unsuccessfully, though, because the blocking had a static quality about it. A symmetrical set consisting of two desks on either side of the stage and a covered bench in the middle added to the monotony.

However, the visuals projected on the cyclorama were really beautiful and carefully chosen by the director to enhance the beauty of the poems. The script was well-crafted, interspersing quotes from letters, poetry and drama, with Ila's own critique of them. Actors Rajeshwari Sachdev, Varun Badola and others read out the pedantic Hindi verses and prose with well-punctuated, clearly pronounced dialogue delivery.

The finale of the play was a performance of *Andha Yug*. It highlights the last day of the Mahabharata war, when Kurukshetra was covered with corpses, the ramparts were in ruins, the city was in flames, while vultures hovered menacingly above. The few hapless survivors of the defeated Kauravas were overcome with grief and rage. Written immediately after the partition of India, the play is a profound commentary on the politics of violence. True, *Andha Yug* showcases Bharti's versatility as a writer-craftsman, but the conclusion appeared to be a departure from the overall theme of the enactment of a complex relationship between three creative and sensitive souls.

Despite everything, the pristine beauty of Bharti's *Shabd Leela* is what remained with one after the performance.

■ MANOHAR KHUSHALANI

# Grand Finale

## PERFORMANCE

**CARNATIC VOCAL RECITAL: By T. M. Krishna**

**15 October 2019**

The Festival of the Arts 2019 aptly concluded with a grand finale—a T. M. Krishna concert. It could not get bigger than this!

You do not expect the conventional from Krishna. He did not disappoint on this occasion either. The range of compositions on the platter was extremely varied and rich, in terms of musical ideas, compositional forms, languages, content of compositions.

Krishna was supported beautifully by the ever-dependable Akkarai Subhalakshmi on the violin, and B. Sivaraman on the mridangam.

Krishna began with a sedate rendition of the evergreen Tyagaraja composition *Vandanamu* in raga *Sahana*. Both the *neraval* and *kalpana swaras* with intricate patterns brought out *Sahana's* melodic potential beautifully.

Krishna then presented Nagur Siddiqui's Tamil Sufi composition in raga *Behag*. Unusual for a Carnatic concert, but you expect that from him. There was a leisurely delineation of *Behag*, followed by the stately composition. The *alapana* anticipated the composition to good effect with superb exchanges between Krishna and Subhalakshmi, effortlessly traversing two-and-a-half octaves. The composition *Allahvai naam tozhudaal* was popularised by the legendry Sufi singer, Nagur Hanifa.

He moved on to a *tanam* in that quintessentially Carnatic raga *Kedaragoula*, followed by a *Basava vachana* in Kannada. The brief *alapana* began with the high notes typical of *Kedaragoula*, and metamorphosed quickly into a *madhyama kala tanam*. Sivaraman's mellifluous *tani* was an apt musical conclusion to this piece.

Then came a beautiful composition in Malayalam, from within the larger *Mayura Sandesha* in the raga *Khamas*. This composition by

the king of Haripad was inspired by Kalidasa's *Megha Sandesham*. A lyrical *alapana* prefaced the composition, further embellished by the *madhyama kala kalpana swaras*. Krishna created wonderful rhythmic patterns, dancing across the octaves.

The latter half of the concert began with the lilting *Paga Ghungaroo Re* by Mirabai. One was immediately reminded of the popular rendition of this composition by M. S. Subbulakshmi. This was embellished by the many rhythmic variations at different points in the composition. One could almost visualise Meera dancing in ecstasy.

Krishna then presented a Kalki Krishnamurthy composition in raga *Kapi*, lingering on the *tara sthayi* passages to great effect. The concert meandered to a close with a leisurely rendition of raga *Lalita*, followed by Gopal Krishna Gandhi's composition inspired by the Buddha's fire sermon. Krishna showcased the raga's melodic potential through a meditative and intensely passionate presentation. Sivaraman complemented beautifully with his soft hands accentuating the melody. One was reminded of Shelley's immortal line, 'Music when soft voices die vibrates in the memory.'

On popular demand, Krishna ended the concert with a soulful rendition of Rabindranath Tagore's popular Bengali composition *Amar Jonmo Bhoomi*. Krishna was greeted with thunderous applause by the appreciative audience.

Krishna's team was in perfect sync through the concert. The audience and the IIC couldn't have asked for more to conclude this well-curated Festival of the Arts.

■ RAHUL RAJAGOPALAN



## A Five-day Culinary Feast

Food Festival at the IIC Festival of the Arts

11-15 October

One of the most enjoyable features of the annual Festival is the daily feast at the Rose Garden. Not only is there a selection of cuisines from different parts of the country, other nations are also represented in food. The countries featured this year were Brazil and Italy.

A very pleasant aspect of almost all the meals was the selection of vegetarian dishes—both starters and mains. An equally pleasant inclusion was that of *Odia Bhoji* (cuisine of Orissa), a cuisine not particularly well known to people outside the state.

The dinner, prepared by chefs of the Odisha Sadan, Delhi, had several high points, from the *bhaja parmal* and fish chops in the starters, to the *dahi baigana*, *ghanta*, *alu potala rasa*, *rohu besara* and *manso alu jhola* in the mains. Also delicious were the dumplings and chutneys that accompanied the meal.

The other Indian cuisines featured were Kannadiga *Oota* prepared by Shri Bhairu Caterers; *Esho bosho ahare*—A Bengali Repast prepared by Chef Anumitra Ghosh Dastidar; and an Awadhi *Bawarchikhana* by Naimat Khana from Lucknow—each distinctive and representative of the cuisine of the region.

Notable to the Kannadiga meal were the array of vegetables, chutneys and breads (a sorghum bread, *neer dosa*, *appam* and Malabar *paratha*). With wheat *payasam* and *holgi*, the meal wrapped up with *paan*, and small bananas typical of the Mysore region. But the food was not for the faint of heart. Chili was a prominent component but accompanied by endless glasses of butter milk.

The Bengali repast had all that one imagines when headed to a meal from the state—beetroot cutlets, *kumror chechki* (with a modern twist!) and fish/chicken rolls to *cholar dal*, *begun bhaja*, *chanar dalna* to *chingri paturi* and a delicious mutton *jhol* with potato. Of course, the *luchis* were spectacular. The meal ended with *mishti doi*, *sandesh* and *paan*.

The Awadhi meal, typical of the Muslim community of the area, had few surprises: notable dishes were the *channe ki dal karela* and *kacche qeema ke kebab*, as also the *khatte baingan* and *murgh qorma*. In dessert there was *phirni*—a show-stopper—and *moong dal ki kheer*.

The international cuisines (catered by Chef John of the Embassy of Brazil and Chef Som Dutt of our very own Taj Mahal Hotel, Delhi) were from two very different parts of the globe but equally well known for their food culture.

The Brazilian menu was a surprise to those of us philistines who think that cuisine is all about meat on skewers! The starters were buns with different toppings. The food had quite a lot of coconut milk—*moqueca de banana* (a stew with banana and coconut milk) and *moqueca de peixe na moranga* (a fish and seafood stew with coconut milk and cream cheese). The desserts were a coconut cake and chocolate pave.

Bringing this extravaganza of food to an end was the Italian *Cena*—and what a delight it was. It so beautifully rounded-off the festival. From its assortment of breads to the antipasti and salads, the minestrone flavoured with tomato and basil, and, the main courses of risotto, stewed and grilled vegetables to the non-vegetarian offerings of pan seared river sole, grilled chicken and mutton stew. What more could one ask for? Except there was coffee tiramisu and passion fruit panna cotta as well!

■ SUNANDA GHOSH

